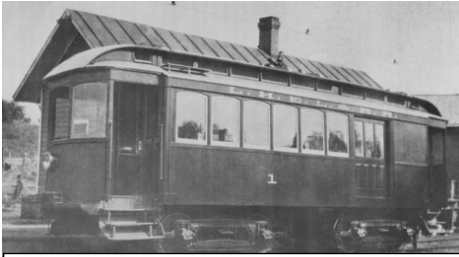


THE YELLOW WASP

Lima Historical Society

November 2022



Car 1. Photo from the James Laemlein Family Collection

Lima's "Little Railroad" And The Electrification of Lima

As Mabel Jenks (1964) tells us, Lima has had a unique railroad history. Although there were periodic plans for bringing a railroad to Lima from as early as the 1840's, no plans were consummated until the 1890's. And for good reason —many in town, especially trustees from Genesee Wesleyan Seminary, felt that railroads would bring unsavory influences from the outside world to Lima.

In 1891, however, a group of entrepreneurs put together enough investors to launch the *Lima-Honeoye Falls Railroad* which would link the two communities. Initial plans called for bringing the railroad, with all its noisy freight and passenger traffic, right up Rochester Street. Yet there was enough enthusiasm in Lima that all but three residents along the right of way in the village had signed deeds allowing it.

Tracks had already been laid from Honeoye Falls to the Lima village line when a rancorous campaign to stop the project began. Jacob Galentine, who lived along the route took the bold step of bringing an injunction against the company. Not unexpectedly, there was mixed reaction to this move, since many others in town felt that the railroad to Honeoye Falls represented "progress" for Lima. Galentine and two other citizens became the subject of threats and violent abuse and were even "hung in effigy." The weight of a legal injunction soon became apparent, however, and plans were made to change the route to a more westerly one, thereby avoiding the main tree-lined N-S residential street through the village.

The *Lima-Honeoye Falls Railroad* opened for business on January 18, 1893. It was met with great excitement by the townspeople and students from GWS. The train ran west from its station across Genesee Street from the present library, then headed north through the ravine crossing College Street, curved east at Dann's corners (Cty Rd 6) and ended up at the New York Central Station in Honeoye Falls (total route 4 mi). Powered by a locomotive called "Old Jake" (for Jacob Galentine??), it ran three round trips per day (25cents). Produce and mail were shipped in freight cars from Lima to Honeoye Falls and connections beyond. Business was booming in Lima.

The fortunes of the "Little Line" took a serious downturn, though, when the *Lehigh Valley Railroad* extended its route from Honeoye Falls through Lima to Hemlock Lake just 2 ½ years after the *Lima Honeoye-Falls RR* had opened for business (see photo on right of construction of Lima trestle south of Pinco). Business declined quickly for the Lima railroad; fares were reduced to 15 cents round trip; and mail delivery reverted to horse and buggy days, literally. Eventually all activity on the line ceased. (continued, p. 3)



From the collections of the Tennie Burton Museum

Save the Date: May 20, 2023
Lima Historical Society
50th Anniversary Celebration

Keep Checking our Website for Details
www.limahistorical.org

LHS Calendar of Events

PLEASE CLIP AND SAVE.

December 8, 2022

LHS Hybrid Board meeting at 7pm. Members welcome to attend. Contact us for link.

January 10, 2023

LHS Hybrid Board meeting at 7pm. Members welcome to attend. Contact us for link.

Dates TBD

Series of Historical Talks at Lima Library: 7pm

Co-sponsored by Lima Historical Society and Lima Public Library

May 20, 2023

50th Anniversary Celebration. Keep checking our website for further details

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HALLOWEEN AT THE TENNIE BURTON MUSEUM

Halloween was a very scary night at the Tennie Burton Museum this year with lighted windows, haunting sounds, and of course lots of candy. About 75 to 100 brave children and their parents met the challenge of “trick or treating” at our door, however, and were met by two heavily disguised LHS Board members (identities unknown), reviving an old Lima Historical Society Halloween tradition.



See you next year kids—if you dare!

A Treasure Trove of Classic Antique Photographs



About a month ago, we discovered two boxes labelled Chapin and Tenny photos, respectively, on a top shelf in the Resource Room at the museum. Going through them we discovered about forty very early photographic images including daguerreotypes (a process invented in 1839) in ornate cases (photo on left), as well as a number of other types of early 19th century photographic images. We called

upon Photographic Conservator, Gary Albright of Honeoye Falls, who graciously spent an evening identifying the types of images that we had found. In addition to the daguerreotypes, he noted many slightly later ambrotypes and tintypes which were less costly to produce still used well into the 1900's.

If anyone is able to identify either of the individuals above from the Chapin or Tenny families, please contact us.

Exciting News

**LHS is Partnering with Lima Public Library
For a Series of Historical Talks in 2023**

Details To Be Announced on our Website

Lima's "Little Railroad" (continued)

By fall 1896, the railroad had gone into foreclosure and was auctioned off at the small train station on Genesee St. Lima banker Horace Gilbert purchased the entire operation for \$6000 and immediately began making upgrades and repairs that were long overdue, including widening the curve at Dann's corner. Train service resumed and before very long the line was taken over by a group of investors from Buffalo and renamed the *Lima Railway Company*. This venture failed too, and service on Lima's little rail line closed yet again.

All was not lost, however, and the next chapter of Lima's rail history was to yield some surprisingly unexpected benefits. There had been growing interest across the country in small rail companies converting from steam to electricity and offering electric power and trolley service to their communities. To quote Paul Worboys (1991, p.23), "The Beldon Company of Buffalo bought the L&HFRR in March 1898...and proposed a street lighting system, commercial, and private lighting and the interurban trolley-all under the name of the *Lima-Honeoye Electric Light and Railroad Company*." It is revealing that Lima town fathers, businessmen, and residents were extremely enthusiastic about the prospect of electricity in town and signed on in substantial numbers, once again showing the foresight that had brought Genesee Wesleyan Seminary to the community some 70 years earlier. Meanwhile, the Honeoye Falls town trustees declined the opportunity for street lighting, saying that "gas lights were just fine" for them.



Power house north of Lima. (courtest, Doug Morgan)

The company built a gas- and later coal-fired power plant about halfway between the two towns on the railroad right of way, bringing electric lights for the very first time to streets, businesses, and homes in Lima. It is hard to imagine a more significant practical innovation in the homes of Lima's early residents than electrification. Some of the old gas lighting wall fixtures, gas lamps, tin lanterns, candleholders, candle molds, and other lighting devices may be seen on exhibit at the Tennie Burton Museum. Be sure to look for them when you visit and ask the kids to identify as many "pre-electric" devices as they can in the museum.

Trolley service from Lima to Honeoye Falls, with initially six trips a day (25 cents round trip and its rail connections to the wider world, was a boon to the citizens of Lima. Despite service being somewhat sporadic due to fuel shortages, snow and occasional accidents, trolley service continued until early 1915. There were near countless ups and downs for the entire enterprise. Huge deficits on the trolley side of the business, along with steady profits on the electric power side, caused fiscal and ownership separation between the power and trolley operations, receiverships, ownership and management changes and eventually resale of both entities. But by then, Lima had entered the modern world of the twentieth century with its well-lit streets and its homes with various electric-powered appliances. Automobiles were now just beginning to appear on the streets of Lima and there was no going back.

(For many more details, see Paul Worboys, A Railroad for Lima, 1991; Mabel Jenks, Lima: The Crossroads of Western NY 1788-1964)

Can You Find This Unique Lima Landmark??

There is an interesting marker in Lima that is hiding in plain sight. Take a walk south on Lake Avenue and see if you can find it. "It is a small round black disc, about five inches in diameter, embedded in the west, or front wall of the (*old*) St. Rose parochial school building on Lake Avenue. On it are lettered the words, 'United States Geological Survey,' and at the bottom are the letters B.M. meaning Bench Mark. Then the most important information in the center, '849 Feet Above Sea Level'."

This important landmark is based on extensive research by the US Geological Survey. It represents the baseline against which the height of everything else in the surrounding area is measured.

(Extracted from Mabel Jenks, Lima: The Crossroads of Western NY 1788-1964, p.48)

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